09/407,667 filed September 28, 1999, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.--

In the Claims:

Please amend each of claims 1-17 as follows:

1. [AMENDED] A factor which selectively interacts with a PrPSc but not with PrPc.

2. [AMENDED] The factor according to claim 1 which is selected from plasminogen, fragments of plasminogen and derivatives thereof.

3. [AMENDED] The factor according to claim 1 characterized in that it interacts with the carboxy terminus of PrPSc.

4. [AMENDED] The factor according to claim 1 characterized in that it is capable of interacting with PrPSc of different species.

5. [AMENDED] A composition comprising a PrPSc and a factor according to claim 1.

6. [AMENDED] The composition according to claim 5, wherein PrPSc is bound to the factor.

7. [AMENDED] The composition according to claim 6, wherein PrPSc is noncovalently bound to the factor.

8. [AMENDED] A carrier comprising a factor according to claim 1 or a composition according to claim 5.

9. [AMENDED] The carrier according to claim 8 which is selected from magnetic beads, filter stripes, microtiter plates, non-magnetic beads, plasmon surface resonance plates, microarray plates, liquid carriers undergoing phase transition to solid, and combination thereof.

10. [AMENDED] A ligand which specifically interacts with a composition according to claim 5.

11. [AMENDED] Diagnostic kits containing a factor according to claim 1 or a composition according to claim 5 or a carrier according to claim 8 or a ligand according to claim 10, optionally together with further components such as buffers, reagents for the detection and working instructions.

12. [AMENDED] Pharmaceutical composition comprising a factor according to claim 1 or a ligand according to claim 10.

13. [AMENDED] A process for detecting a PrPSc in a sample, characterized in that the sample is contacted with a factor according to claim 1 or a carrier according to claim 8 or a ligand according to claim 10.

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14. [AMENDED] A process for removing PrPSc from biological material, comprising the step of contacting the material with a factor according to claim 1 or a carrier according to claim 8 or a ligand according to claim 10.

15. [AMENDED] Method for diagnosing human transmissible spongiform encephalopathies and prion encephalopathies of animals, characterized in that the material of the organism to be tested is brought into contact with a factor according to claim 1 or a carrier according to claim 8 or a ligand according to claim 10.

16. [AMENDED] Use of a factor according to claim 1 or a composition according to claim 5 or a carrier according to claim 8 or a ligand according to claim 10 for the diagnosis of human transmissible spongiform encephalopathies or prion encephalopathies of animals.

17. [AMENDED] Use of a factor according to claim 1 or a composition according to claim 5 or a carrier according to claim 8 or a ligand according to claim 10 for removing PrPSc from and/or inactivating PrPc in a biological material.